

# Sayings of Mother Theodore Guerin

## Foundress, Sisters of Providence

Have confidence in the Providence that so far has never failed us. The way is not yet clear. Grope along slowly.

Woman in this country is only yet one-fourth of the family. I hope that, through the influence of religion and education, she will eventually become at least one-half — the "better half."

It would be better to be guarded in your words than always asking pardon.

Love all in God and for God, and all will be well.

To write requires time; but to *love*, to *cherish*, to *pray for*, through that desire we have for the happiness of our friends, time is not needed.

Try to bear everything from others without making them bear anything from you.

When we seek God he generally arranges things so all good is found with him.

Particularly I admire two virtues rare in our days, a profound humility and immense charity.

Pray for me occasionally that I may not lose courage; nay, more, that I may be brave enough to hold up others who sometimes falter.

I always find a new sacrifice to make when I think I have reached the end.

Send your heart a thousand times a day to adore our Lord really and truly present in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

In the education of children two virtues are essential: justice and kindness.

He has always protected us; if we love him, he will never abandon us.

We truly love each other very tenderly, but I do not believe this affection is displeasing to God. . . . The good God does not forbid us to love. To love in the right way is to accomplish the whole law.

How bountifully he provides for our wants — I would even say our pleasures.

Let us keep ever united in Our Lord. When we love one another in him, we love him better.

I feel keenly that to do any good here one must be entirely dependent on the Spirit of God.

*Sisters of Providence  
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN  
Series G-1*

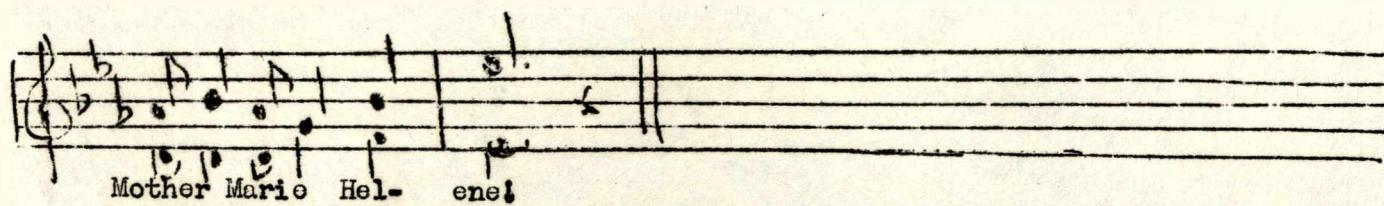
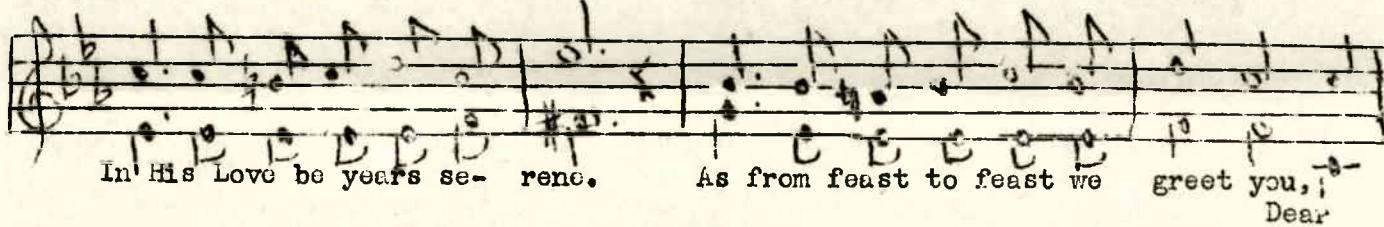
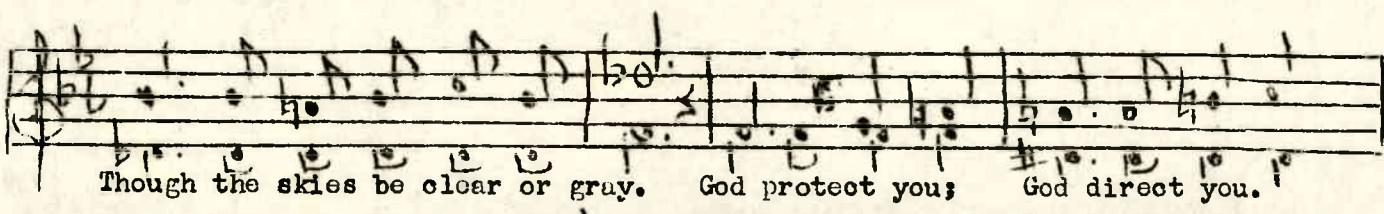
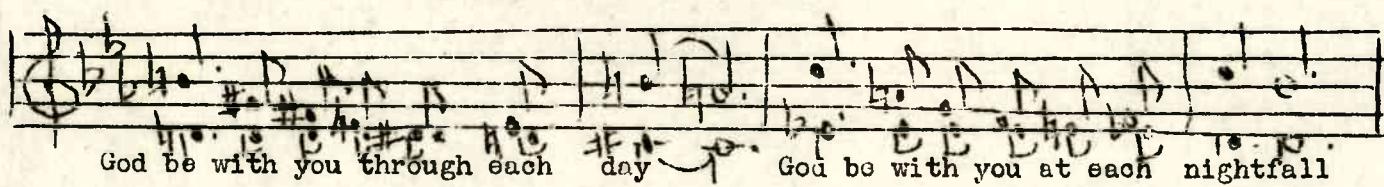
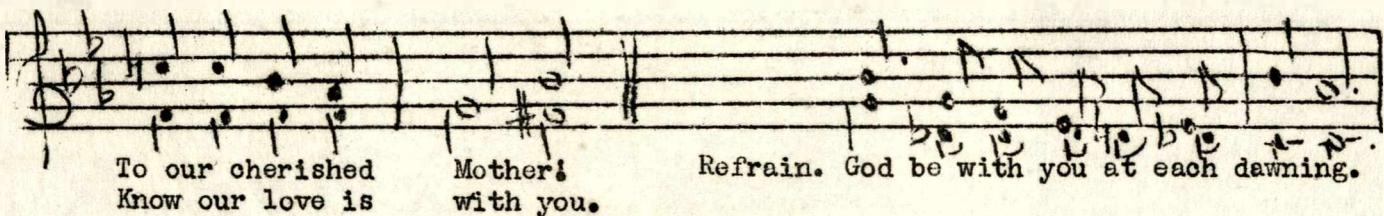
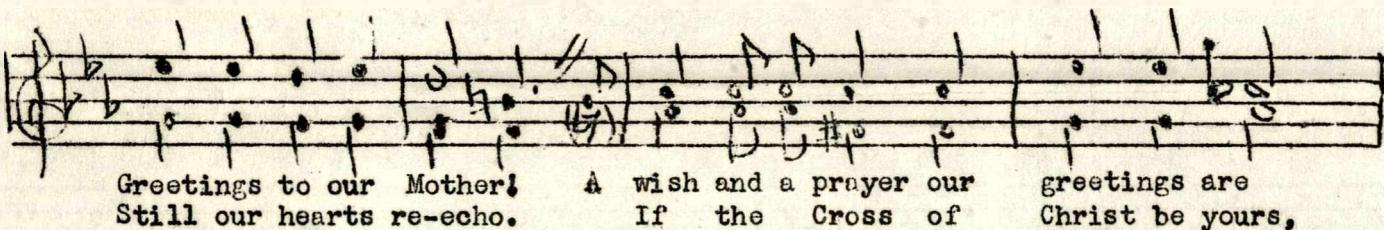
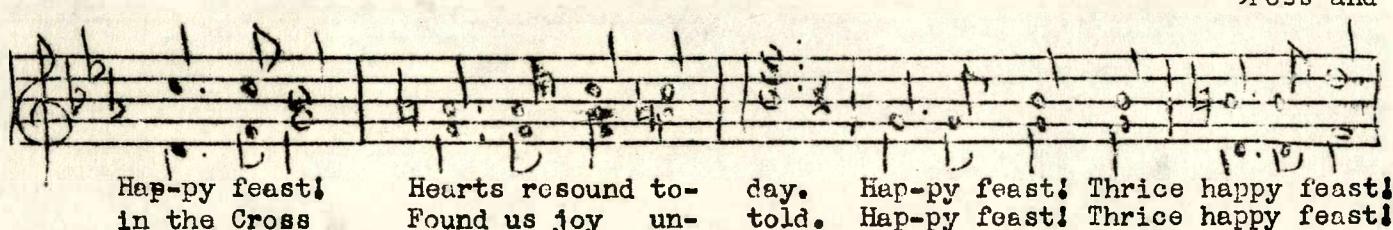
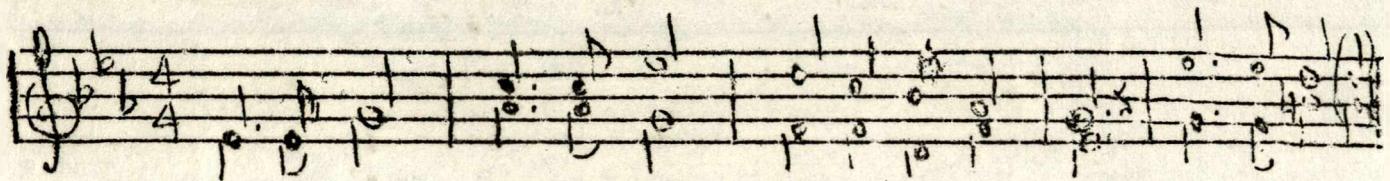


J.M.J.

FEAST - DAY CHORUS

Words by Sister Rose Angela, S.P.

Music by Sister M. Lourdes, S.P.



As the young community responded to the many needs of the people in Indiana, the sisters found themselves scattered across the state. Mother Theodore visited the growing number of missions regularly to encourage the sisters and to see if she could assist them in any way. Even in times when her own health was failing she continued to show her care and affection for her sisters and the people with whom she worked. Some words of advice and encouragement are found in her letters. "Without distinctions, do good to all for the love of God." And in regard to education . . . "In the education of children two virtues are essential, justice and kindness."

The sisters were not the only ones to benefit from the gentle ways of Mother Theodore. One young woman recounts her memories of Mother Theodore. "I was crying when I entered Mother's presence. Learning the cause of my tears, Mother kissed me on my forehead . . . Auntie often spoke of the blessing Mother so consolingly gave me. Mother had a little dish of sliced peaches dressed with sugar and claret wine which she would feed to me with her frail hand and enjoyed seeing our pleasure eating her refreshments."

Mother Theodore's joyful ways, despite seemingly unbearable difficulties, truly made a difference to those around her. One sister writes, "I so often remarked with wonder how natural her joy appeared to be."

More than a century has passed since Mother Theodore lived among the people of Indiana. But it still benefits us to listen carefully to her words as we come to know and to love the Lord. "The good God does not forbid us to love. To love in the right way is to accomplish the whole law."

Since her death at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in 1856, numerous favors have been received through the intercession of Mother Theodore Guerin. The inscription on her monument in the sisters' cemetery reminds us of her continuing care. "I sleep but my heart watches over this house which I have built."

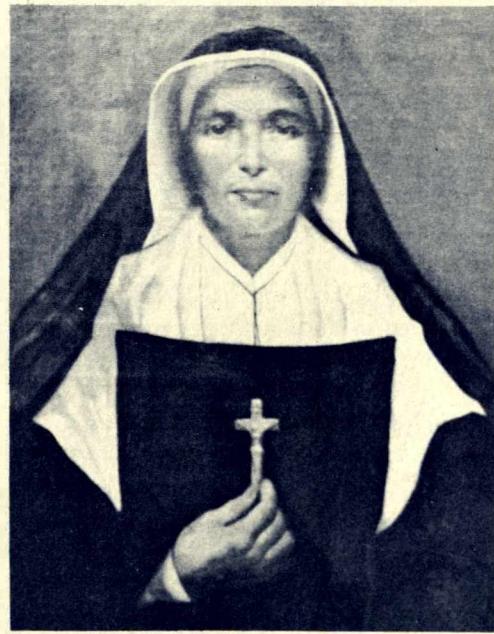
Presently the cause for Mother Theodore's beatification has been introduced in Rome. Any account of favors received through the intercession of Mother Theodore or requests for more detailed information about her life should be sent to the Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana 47876.

*Sisters of Providence — 1980*



My heart watches . . .

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



*Mother  
Theodore  
Guerin  
foundress*

*REFERENCE  
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Sisters of Providence  
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN



In October of 1798, Anne Therese Guerin was born in Etables, France. At the age of 24, she entered the religious community of the Sisters of Providence at Ruille. After two years in community she took her first vows and on the same day was appointed to be the superior of a school in Rennes. Later she was assigned to a small country town where she devoted her energies to teaching and caring for the sick.

During the spring of 1839, the Bishop of Vincennes, Indiana asked for some sisters to come to the new world to help him serve the needs of the people moving into his diocese. The superiors of the sisters at Ruille decided to allow six sisters to assist the Bishop. The sisters were asked to volunteer for this mission since it was doubtful whether or not they

would ever be able to return to their homeland. However, Anne Therese, now known as Sister Theodore, was told that the sisters would go only if she were to lead them. The superiors felt that Sister Theodore was the only sister capable of founding such a mission. During the past 16 years as a Sister of Providence, Sister Theodore had displayed her superb talents as an educator and had studied pharmacy in order to assist the sick. Both of these talents were needed for the new foundation.

Sister Theodore made her decision during her retreat in August of 1839. She would lead the sisters to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, and found the American community of the Sisters of Providence. The sisters left their homeland in July of the following year.

It was at dusk on the evening of Oct. 22, 1840, when Mother Theodore Guerin and her five sister companions arrived safely at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Their journey had taken them nearly four months. The sisters had agreed among themselves to go before the Blessed Sacrament as soon as they arrived. They offered a heartfelt thanksgiving for the safe journey, and they asked God's blessings on their future endeavors in their new home.

The first years in Indiana were quite difficult for the Sisters of Providence. Some factors which added to their hardships were the isolated location

of the foundation, extreme weather conditions, financial difficulties, misunderstandings within the diocese and unfavorable attitudes in the country toward religious. Some of Mother Theodore's feelings can be captured in an excerpt from her personal journal. "Truly we have much to suffer in our deep forest . . . having no other support, no other consoler than God alone." Despite the trials faced, Mother Theodore had the ability to look beyond her personal hardships and was able to inspire others to face each day cheerfully with hope and trust in God.



*St. Mary's*

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EXTRACTS FROM COMMUNITY RECORDS

Community Affairs File

On the 12th of August 1848, the Council of the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, met to deliberate upon a proposition made by Rev. Simon Lalumière, Pastor of the Catholic Church in Terre Haute, who asks whether we would be willing to form an establishment in that city. The venerable Priest offers a lot of one hundred and some feet in length and seventy-five in width joining the Catholic Church. He offers to give the property to our Congregation on condition that we build on this lot a school-house, and that we suitably repair an old school-building which already existed there. He promised, moreover, to help us build a house in giving all that he could collect by subscription, which he had already begun with great success.

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*Sisters of Providence  
St. Mary-of-the-Woods*

*Saint Mary of the Woods*

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**rhythms  
and  
tension**



**MOTHER THEODORE GUERIN**  
Foundress of the Sisters of Providence  
Terre Haute, Indiana

**sisters of providence**

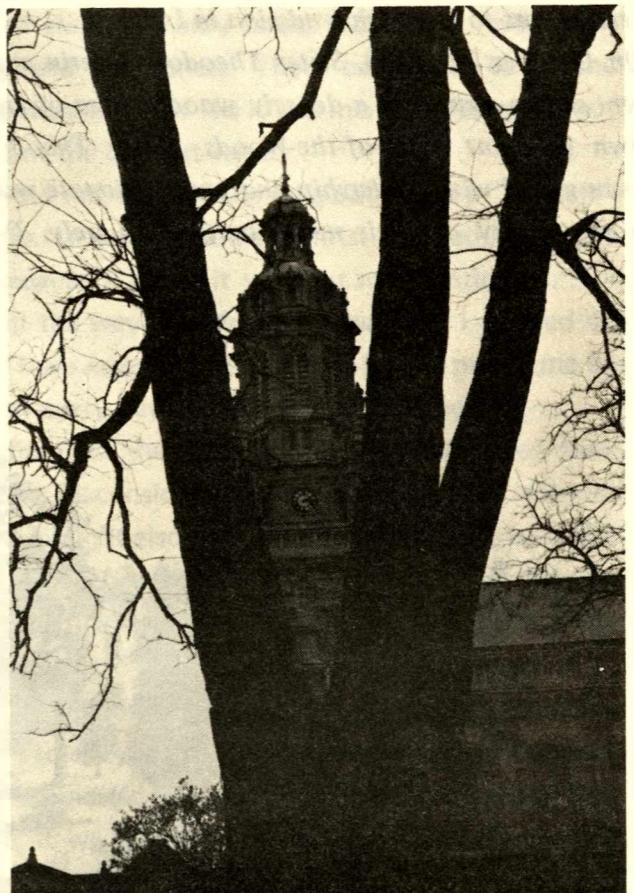
**Saint Mary of the Woods, IN**

**Rhythms and Tension**

Rhythms and patterns appear constantly within a lifetime, many of them recurrent, some of them new. These happenings, events, and day-to-day occurrences are meant to form the individual, to encourage growth, to teach joy and laughter, to help us become vulnerable so that we might come to need one another and respond with love to those who need us. These constant rhythms, sometimes harsh, sometimes gentle, form us so that we may develop within our own pattern. Only one tension can alter the pattern, only one tension can change the rhythm — the Divine Tension.

Within the life of every person this tension manifests itself. It can be as subtle as a difficult mood, a bad day, that uncomfortable feeling. Or it can be as powerful as the moments experienced by St. John of the Cross, which he came to describe as the dark night of his soul. Only this Divine Tension can so alter the life of a human being — that normal rhythm of a would-be content life — that one is called to respond with one's total being and for the rest of one's life.

Thomas Merton once wrote that choosing to live a life in a monastery is no guarantee that one will find immediate peace. That comes only after one is able to envision oneself as "not even possible" without the Divine. Even then, such insight is a gift. But then, so is the courage freely to choose this lifestyle, allowing the Divine Tension to interfere with the patterns and familiar rhythms of one's life. This book is dedicated to those who know what it is to feel this Divine Tension and to respond to it. In the hope that others may benefit from their experiences and thoughts, they share, with love, their Divine Tensions, their life's patterns and many rhythms.

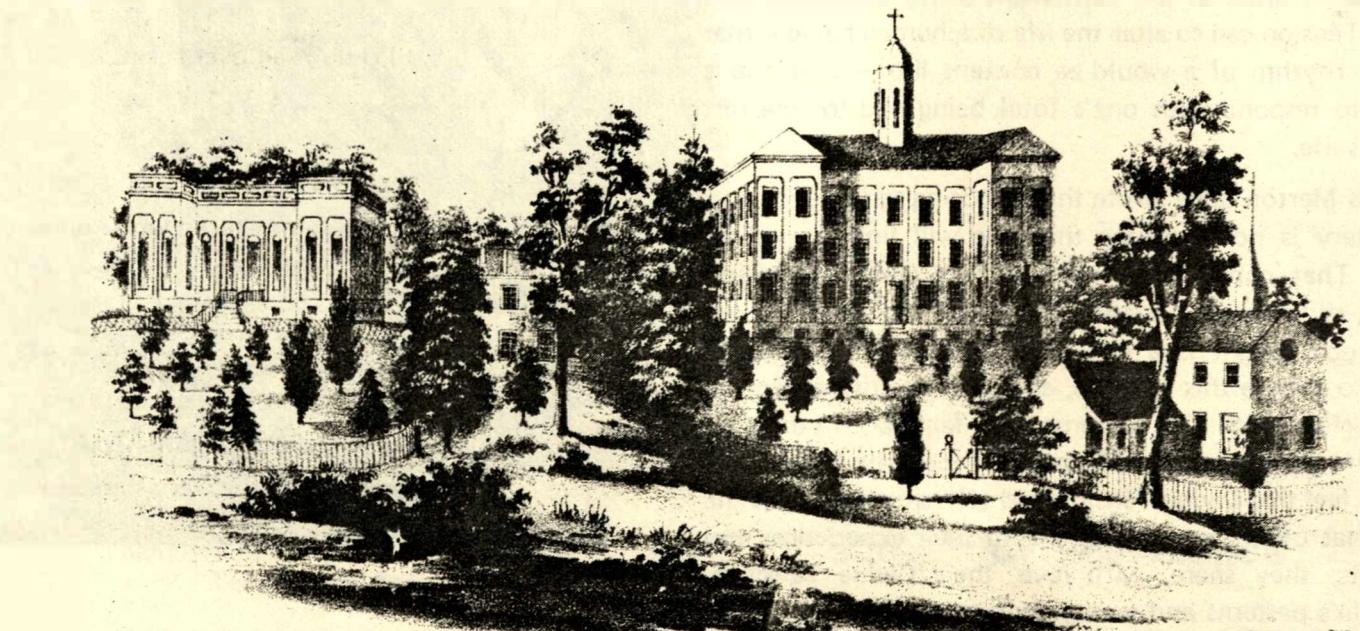


The story of Sisters of Providence in America has its beginnings in the turmoil that gripped France in its post-revolutionary days. Founded in 1806 by Father Jacques-Francois Dujarié, the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loire helped to keep the struggling church alive in the times following the revolution. In 1839, this flourishing community was invited by the Bishop of Vincennes to send sisters to establish a mission in Indiana.

On October 22, 1840, Sister Theodore Guerin and five other sisters arrived in a densely wooded area of Indiana known as Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Sister Theodore, a woman gifted with leadership and compassionate warmth, met the reality of their new situation squarely. Despite

dire poverty and misunderstandings with the surrounding non-Catholic population, Sister Theodore forged a vision of spreading the Kingdom of God by meeting the needs of the time and the situation in which the Sisters found themselves. Her community built a reputation for excellence in education and justice in both ministry and in their community affairs.

Today, the Sisters of Providence continue in the spirit of their foundress, serving the church according to the talents and abilities of their members. The Sisters of Providence respond continuously to change in the world, in society, in the church and within their own community.



T.Y. Strong Lith. 33 Main St. N.Y.



NAME:

Sister Francis Theodore O'Toole, S.P.

MINISTRY:

Retired Teacher

YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:

1906, Illinois

YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:

1931

## SISTER FRANCIS THEODORE

Sister Francis Theodore O'Toole says she is "73 years old and free, not holding." She has been a member of the Sisters of Providence since Feb. 2, 1931.

Vocations are eminently practical and realistic because the religious life deals with the extension of Christ's life. His life is all about the only values that count: love, truth, mercy, joy and forgiveness. There can never be a time when the enfleshment of His life in men and women is not needed and of the greatest value.

I know I did not think of the religious life as a "lifestyle" but as a life. It was the pull of Christ that led me to the convent, because I know it was not my wanting it . . . I fought it all the way. But from the moment I entered 47 years ago, I have never regretted God's having pulled me in. It gets better every day and I'd do it all over again.

The difficulties that this community has faced have never led me to consider leaving it. What is life without difficulties? I might also say that I am much happier today than I was years ago when we were not faced with "almost frightening difficulties." One would have to leave the human race to avoid difficulties.

The future of this community could be a glorious one. It might be radically different from the pattern of the past, but if we as individuals and as a congregation put first things first, if we try to respond to the very demanding call of the Gospel, if we are truly of one mind and one heart, we can face any danger. It may well be that Christ

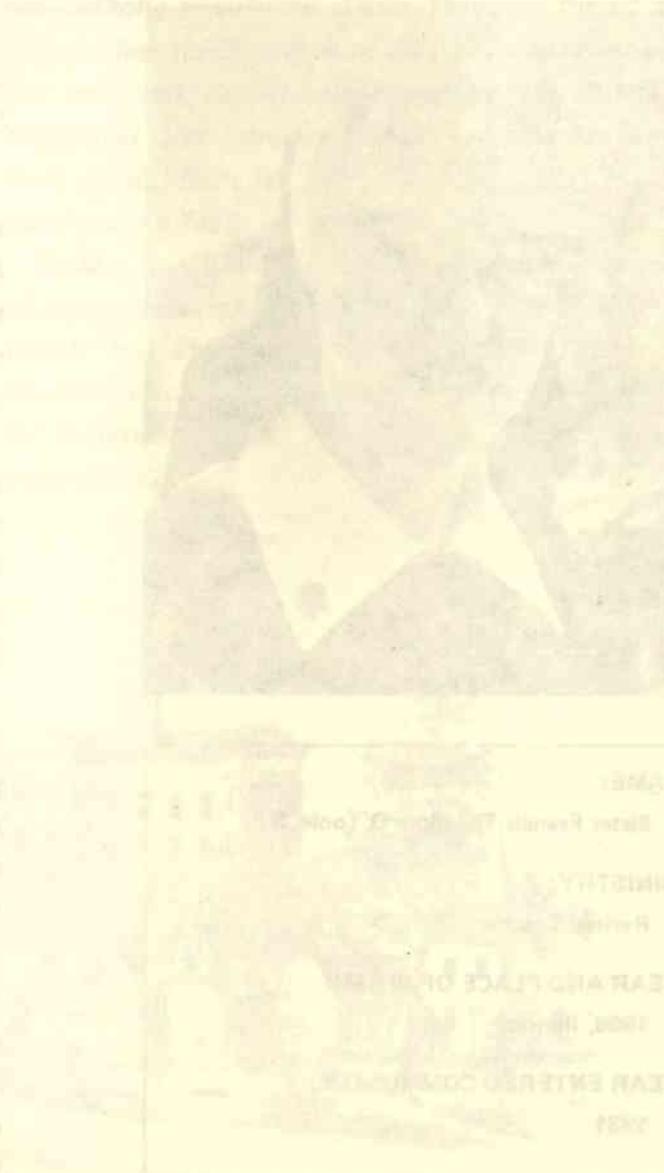
will do to us what He did to Peter in his old age, lead him to where he would never have chosen to go. Should that happen, I pray that I'll remember that there is no place that I can go where Christ is not there ahead of me.

But that is the essence of spirituality, the constant awareness in every situation and in every relationship of the presence of Christ together with a constant affirmation of His being not only Saviour but Lord. It is great to see what joy comes from living through a personal experience where Jesus wins the ball game. The very essence of fulfillment for me has nothing to do with accomplishments or with pats on the back from those in high places or low. It has nothing to do with my being recognized as a person, or of my feeling worthwhile or needed or appreciated. Personal fulfillment for me is not a "personal" thing. It is the over-flow of the deep awareness of Jesus being not only in the center but also His being the fixed point that never varies.

The greatest freedom I have experienced as a religious is to be free to listen to Christ as He speaks in every situation and in the Holy Scripture. Also, the freedom of having time.

This is the thrilling part of being 73 years old and out of a classroom. I have the freedom to share the bread of time and the bread of self and the bread of compassion in service to others.

I am now free of pressure so that I am able to walk out on the beautiful grounds at the Woods and enjoy dandelions and praise God and sing where only the birds can hear me. I am a terribly spoiled child of God.



**NAME:**

Sister Barbara Sheehan, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**

Assistant Pathology Administrative Supervisor  
Chaplain — Jewish Hospital, Louisville

**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**

1942, Indiana

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**

1960

**SISTER BARBARA SHEEHAN**

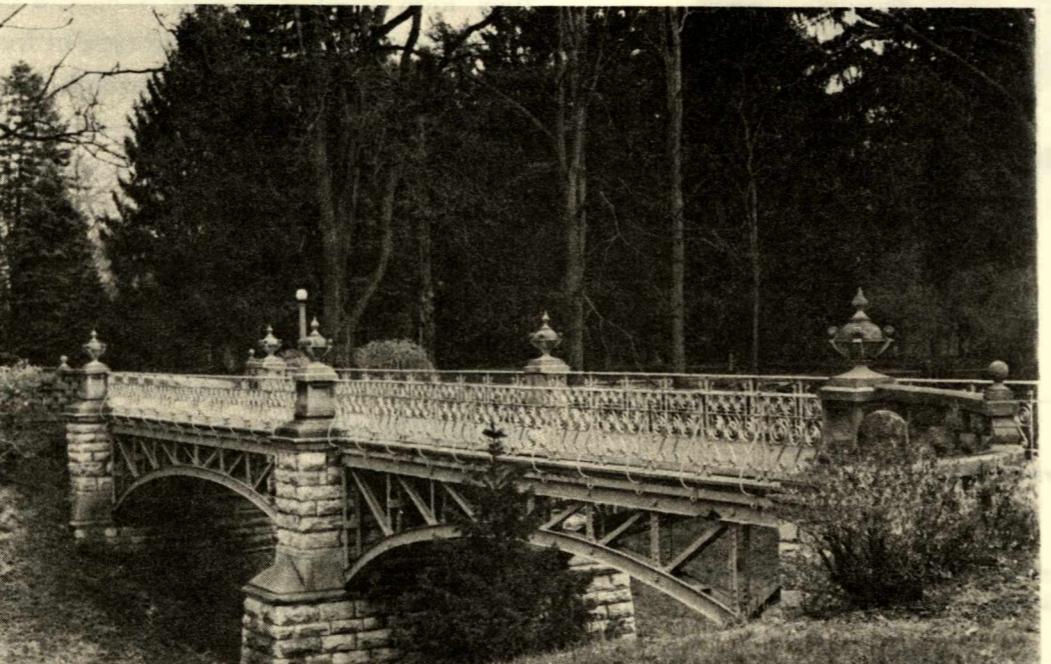
I see our community moving into functions often thought to be strictly male church, such as spiritual direction, retreat work, pastoral counseling, sacramental ministry and team parish ministry. To me, this development seems consistent with our history as a community. As I read it, there has been a continual effort on the part of our sisters to meet the needs of the times with the talents that they individually possessed. I have a conviction that a religious woman's lifestyle and type of freedom are needed in today's world for today's people. Both of these ideas were borne out in my own experience when the Bishop of Louisville requested that I take on a chaplaincy in addition to my responsibilities as a medical technologist. Chaplaincy was once an all-male club, but it has become apparent that there is something intrinsically valuable and appealing about the religious woman in this role.

We are also moving towards a greater sense of openness and responsibility in terms of our own lives. We are growing in womanhood as expressed in the vowed life. As for myself, I am a warm person and can most comfortably share myself with others in this lifestyle.

For me there is great freedom of self-expression through prayer and apostolate as a Sister of Providence; this is personal fulfillment. It is one's completion as best defined at a particular time joined with an openness to discover more. It is that personal identity that allows one to feel good about herself, her expression of herself and her

continued growth.

I have not tried the married life and I have not lived as a single woman outside community. All I can say is that for me, expressing myself in community is my call.



**NAME:**

Sister Josephine Bryan, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**

Director of Nursing Services —  
Our Lady of Lourdes Infirmary,  
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**

1933, Maryland

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**

1955

**SISTER JOSEPHINE BRYAN**

Spirituality is the attachment to religious values, the concentration on the authentic life in oneself, the process of growth in Christ, and living the essentials of honesty, friendship, humility and love. Spirituality is the active process within the person who sees the perfect fulfillment of the world as her responsibility, and acts accordingly.

Our community has a history of actively meeting the needs of the times, such as the care of the injured and dying during the Civil War. These sisters met needs as they presented themselves. They had the ability to respond to God as He calls out through the needs of all people.

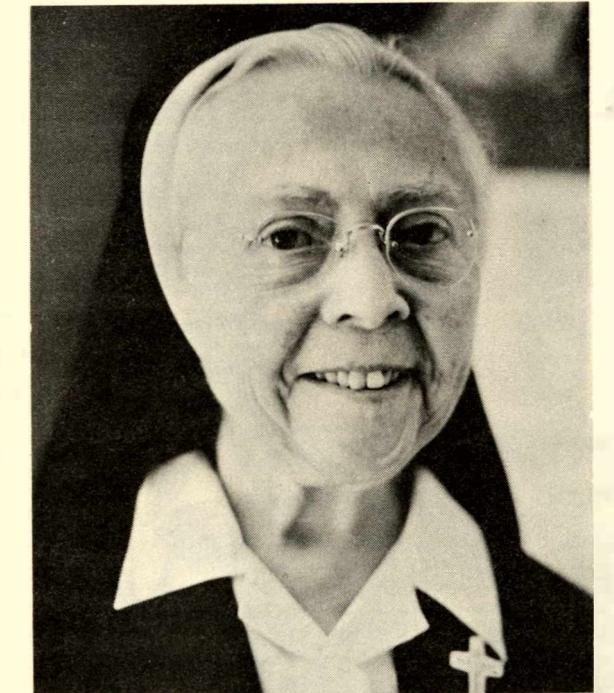
I find that it is this very thing — the ability and freedom to respond as I am needed — that is my greatest freedom as a religious. I also enjoy the support of others who value this. For myself and others, such a lived faith does not seek the security of an institution, but hears the crying out of human beings. I have always had a great respect and concern for the aged. I believe that persons must grow and live freely until death, and I have actively tried as a nurse to witness to that conviction.

It was not easy for me to enter a religious community because I had always had the thought that I wanted to marry and have a family. I don't know exactly what changed my attitude then, but later in my life, when I went to care for orphans in Vietnam, a particular incident brought something home to me. A soldier said to me, "you should not be a nun, you're too warm, too feminine."

He implied that I should have married. I said to him that it was precisely those qualities that made "a nun."

If a woman had never wanted to have children — if she had never wanted to nurture and care for life — how could she ever be a good religious?

Religious life is mainly about responding. Responding to life is a free loving human action that can only be done by a whole person. If I am not striving to be that free loving and "wholesome" person, then I don't feel comfortable in calling myself a religious.



**NAME:**

Sister Anne Berchmans Taylor, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**

Greenhouse Operation - Motherhouse

**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**

1904, Indiana

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**

1922

SISTER ANNE BERCHMANS

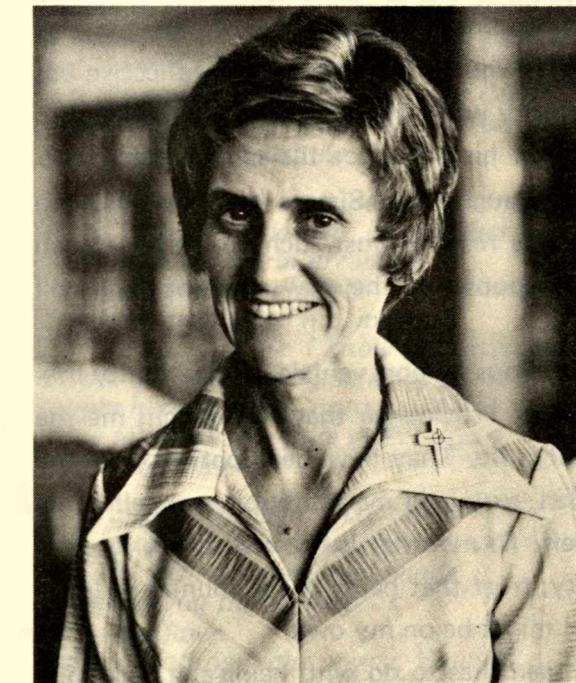
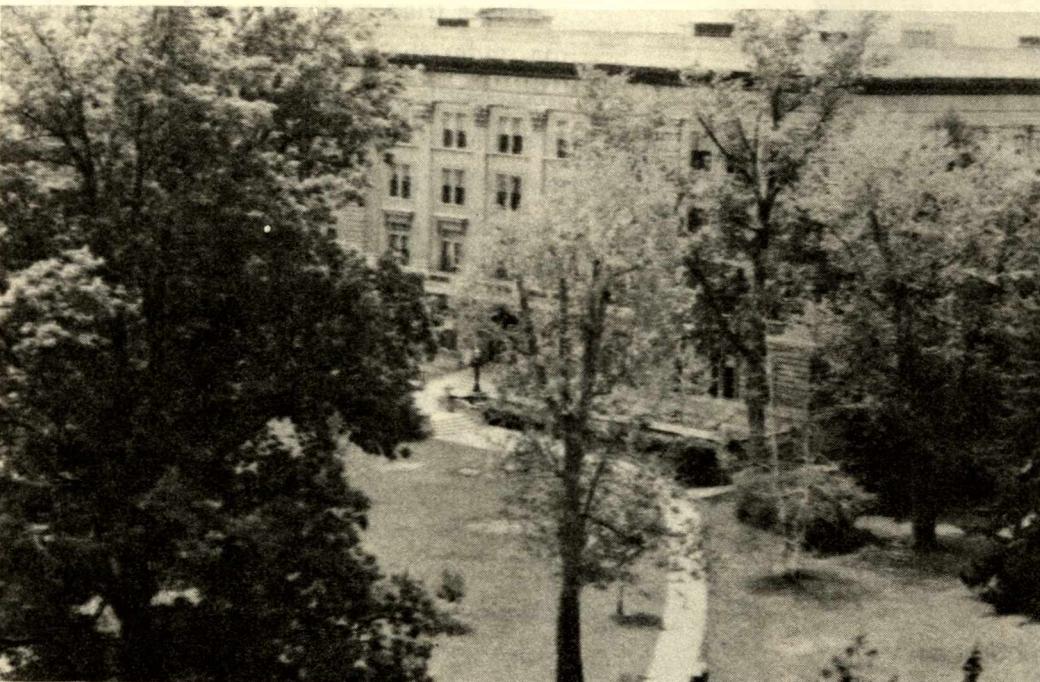
Saint Augustine said, "Our hearts were made for you, O God, and they will not rest until they rest in You." I knew for myself that I loved God and wanted to be near Him and that I wanted to be with others who loved God and would understand my desire to live in His presence. No other lifestyle could give me as completely the beginning of this rest that Augustine talks about. I wanted the freedom to place God and His service first in my life — and to do this with all the strength of my mind and heart.

I have tried to do the best I could with the talents given me under the circumstances which I have reason to feel were God's will for me. I was fortunate to witness the example of women who were sincerely and completely dedicated to God's honor and will. I felt that they were interested in me and my becoming a good religious. Because I felt this way, the difficult things they asked of me were attempted whole-heartedly. Their good example and self-effacement inspired me to desire the accomplishment of God's will in my own regard.

Women religious are as important as they ever were because human needs basically do not change even with the upheavals of the world. Every person has a need for human understanding, sympathy, guidance and love. For some people, some of these needs will never be met unless there are those who are willing to set aside their own pleasure and interests to minister to these needs.

I feel we are headed toward a community smaller in

number but with a broader scope of activities. These activities will include more participation in the work of the government, a more intense effort to help improve conditions of the underprivileged and a greater interest in correcting the evils of social injustices. In all of this, we will be successful only in so far as we are women of faith and prayer, mindful of our dependence on God's providence to help us live simple and courageous lives.

**NAME:**

Sister Helen Vinton, S.P.

**MINISTRY:****YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH**

1932, Nebraska

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**

1953

**SISTER HELEN VINTON**

The greatest freedom I experience as a religious is growing in the experience of what my baptism is, of my own life as it developed in my family and of my voluntary commitment to the Sisters of Providence. This growth experience helps me find the balance between my understanding of myself (who I am — family — talents — unique experiences) and what the purpose of life is for me as I share the mission of Christ in bringing the fullness of life to all His family.

For me, there was a ready-made connection between my own background and what I learned about our community's history. From my family and growing up in rural Nebraska, I knew of the death-resurrection cycle of life — what my parents would have called "life's ups-and-downs." The history I heard about our early community as a postulant, the stories told to me by the sisters with whom I lived, and my own experiences in community, reflected the same "dying-rising" cycle I knew, only in a different way. I realized that difficulties in life should serve to drive you on toward a renewed faith.

I am always growing in the wonder of God's love for me and I am — in my brokenness as a person and with all my limitations. Inevitably, I begin to feel God's wholeness in me. Knowing that I am in and with Christ shaping a world that is constantly dying and rising — just as I am personally — has given me a real sense of God accomplishing His purpose in and with me.



## SISTER THERESE GUERIN SULLIVAN

As I have come to know myself better, I have come to know and love God more. The grace to be reflective has deepened the integrity with which I respond to God and to life. As I look at our history, I see the same pattern; one sister's response brought the Sisters of Providence to America. Our future rests on just such an event — each sister's personal response to the new situations she will meet.

There is a tremendous support vehicle in community life. It is other Sisters of Providence that have taught me the way of community life. They have been patient with me when I have failed, sustained me in doubt, and called me to be my best self. To me, that is the central reality of a life in community; trust that being in community calls me to be more than I might be on my own.

Personal fulfillment has to do with being and becoming myself. If being who I am includes being called by God to be a religious, then to be myself at the deepest level is revealed in my life in community. I can never neglect the challenge to respond deeply and authentically to my chosen lifestyle.

**NAME:**  
Sister Therese Guerin Sullivan, S.P.  
**MINISTRY:**  
Elementary School Teacher  
**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**  
1941, Massachusetts  
**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**  
1959

## Sign

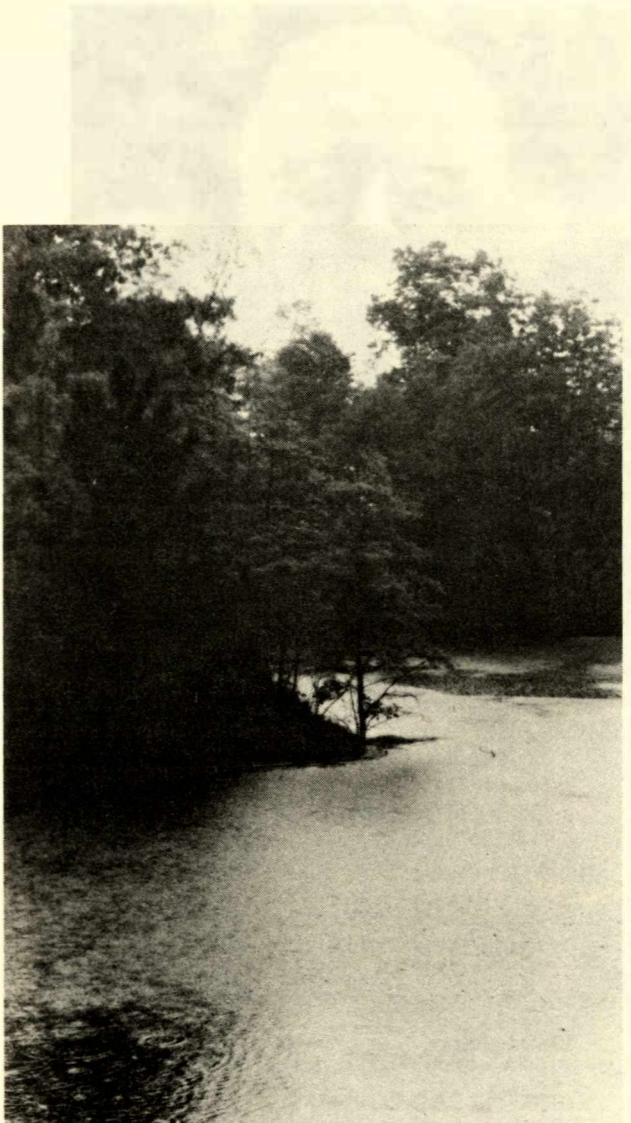
*I wake in the empty house to the sound of rain  
at my window. The others have all gone away.  
But there is no rain. There were no others.  
It is the sound of the sea that rolls deep  
outside my walls far below the waves  
curling white toward the sky.*

*And my house has no windows. I am Jonas  
in the belly of Leviathan. I remember  
the dream. Or is it in dreaming  
that I remember waking?  
You have swallowed me, my God.  
You do not fool me. I know this monster  
is you. There are no remains of a fish's  
supper here. If this is not you, it is  
some false fish. No false gods remain,  
only false fish!*

*I was angry. I thought I could row  
away from you. But you stormed after  
me, and with the sun-dried hands  
of sailors you threw me back  
into your jaws.  
I cannot fathom your mercy. You will  
not let me rest, even here, for we are  
floundering at the bottom of some ocean  
while the boat on which I'd stowed away  
sails out of the squalls with which  
you chased me.*

*Out of the depths of the belly  
of this gigantic fish, I cry out.  
And you are listening to me, as you swim  
along. Where are we going?  
You do not answer. I will go back  
to sleep. No one will ever find me.  
I do not need to prophesy inside a fish!*

*An upward surge: A seasick whale is spewing  
forth his prophet on a beach.*





### SISTER MARIE CLARICE TOOMEY

I joined a religious community in order to be and do what I could not be or do alone — to be and work with people who shared the same hopes, ideals and dreams, and who support one another by their love, encouragement, acceptance, deep prayer and sense of mission in response to God's call.

For me, community life and work have interrelated with my personal struggles. Often in my community life I was given a tremendous amount of responsibility when I wasn't quite prepared for it. When I was young I was made a local superior. This is something that I never thought myself capable of, no matter what age. I remained a local superior until later middle age, when I was made a provincial superior. You cannot imagine how much these events challenged how I thought about myself. I could not take these responsibilities lightly, nor could I afford to indulge myself with feelings of utter inadequacy. I had to look inside myself — listen to that interior self — and search for something greater than my own personal preferences in life. Our constitutions say that community life is "lived not only in moments of light and peace, but through the pain and darkness of human existence." As a result of my initial choice for religious life, I found myself in circumstances that I never would have chosen for myself. These were both times of pain and darkness, as well as times of growth.

In daily living, I learned to set goals, and do everything I

could to realize them. God gave me certain abilities, as well as the choice to call on my union with God — as a resource. This, along with the inspiration and support of other Sisters of Providence, has enabled me to meet challenges that I could not have met and, just as importantly, I have learned to know, love and serve the tremendous mystery of God deeply and lovingly.

<b>NAME:</b>	Sister Marie Clarice Toomey, S.P.
<b>MINISTRY:</b>	Coordinator of Conferences/Facilities Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College
<b>YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:</b>	1909, Illinois
<b>YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:</b>	1929





### SISTER WENDY WORKMAN

For me, my call and response to religious life are an expression of service to humankind. It is the way I have been called to respond to life, to others, to my own needs and to my God. As a woman religious, I am free to share my entire being with those people who love me and really believe in me — all my hopes, fears and joys. I have the freedom to try and to fail. This is the freedom to be myself.

I feel there is great beauty and joy in living with women who are dedicated and working together to further God's kingdom. There is a sense of togetherness and working for a common cause that cannot be found in another lifestyle. There is a beautiful sense of love and sharing and support that we give to one another.

There is also an intense love for Jesus Christ that brought us together from different walks of life and that continues to bind us together despite differences and problems. Community continually calls me to grow, to take notice, to learn, to respond to all that is inside of me.

Personal struggles are experiences that have changed my spiritual life. Struggles always make a person look deeply into herself. Each time I go within myself and search, I always find things that give me a sense of new life and discovery. This allows me to touch the inner core of my being and touch God in a simple yet intense way.

The more complete person I can be the more fulfillment there will be in my life. The more fulfilled I am in life, the more I will be able to help and serve others. The beautiful

thing about this is that we are doing this together — as a community — and with a great faith in the Providence of God.



**NAME:**  
Sister Wendy Workman, S.P.  
**MINISTRY:**  
Physical Education Instructor,  
Corpus Christi School, Oklahoma  
**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**  
1950, Illinois  
**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**  
1976



### SISTER LORETTA THERESE O'LEARY

In the past, this Community was engaged in works of education, primarily with the young. Changes of all kinds and in all fields, including the work of women religious, have meant a broadening of the base of the educational work of the Sisters of Providence as well as a branching out into other works.

A strong and effective conviction of God's unfailing Providence has always been a part of our heritage. Faith and trust in the Providence of God has been for me, as for many others, the resource in all our necessities, difficulties included.

In the years to come, perhaps the pattern will include more intercommunity activities and living, which at the present time exist to some degree. I believe the Sisters of Providence will continue to serve the Church in works which spread the work of Christ and His Kingdom. The work may be more diversified because the form it takes will be determined by the aptitudes of those who come to us. Religious life today is practical, realistic and valuable, and the need is as great as it ever was.

The work of religious in whatever capacity can be and should be motivated by love for Christ and the desire to serve Him in the milieu in which they are placed.

Looking back over my 59 years of religious life, I realize that my life has been touched and enriched by the lives of many Sisters of Providence as well as by the good fortune of instructions and directives from very competent, holy

religious in my earlier years.

At age 15, the age I entered community, what impressed me most about the religious life was that the Sisters gave themselves to Christ to help save souls. As a religious, I have experienced the freedom of participating in the work of the Church for souls both on the active level and the contemplative level. Our vowed life and manner of living makes it possible to have more time for prayer than would otherwise be possible.

One aspect of religious life, an important and meaningful one, has been the privilege of the Eucharistic Presence in our convents. Our Blessed Sacrament Chapel, characterized by many as a powerhouse of grace and strength, is for us in time of need, through the prayers of our Sisters, the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord to be with us always.

**NAME:**  
Sister Loretta Therese O'Leary, S.P.  
**MINISTRY:**  
Assistant Librarian  
Immaculata Preparatory School  
**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**  
1904, Massachusetts  
**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**  
1920



## SISTER LAURA ANN Mc LAUGHLIN



If a woman were to ask me if a vocation today is practical, realistic or valuable, my response would be yes. To answer the question negatively would be to say that I am living a lie. Religious life today, if lived to its fullest, is a complete contradiction of what American society holds to be most valuable — materialism and "doing your own thing" at any cost.

The greatest freedom I enjoy as a religious is the ability to deny the materialistic American system. This is not to say that I always do it, but I am free from the usual societal constraints. Living in South America for five years and witnessing poverty first hand have had a deeply personal effect on me. I realized that things are just that, objects, and that life goes on without them.

I am presently teaching in a bilingual classroom at Maternity, B.V.M., in Chicago. After the experience of learning a second language and understanding the culture of Spanish-speaking people, I knew the experience was too valuable to be forgotten. Therefore, I came to Chicago to be of service to the Spanish-speaking people here.

One aspect I could not find in any other lifestyle would be the support that comes from being a part of a group with the same ideals that I hold for myself. It has been my experience that our Sisters of Providence have been of prime importance in my life. The sisters with whom I have lived have challenged me to live a quality of life that

**NAME:**  
Sister Laura Ann McLaughlin, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**  
Teacher: Bilingual Pre-Kindergarten  
and Kindergarten

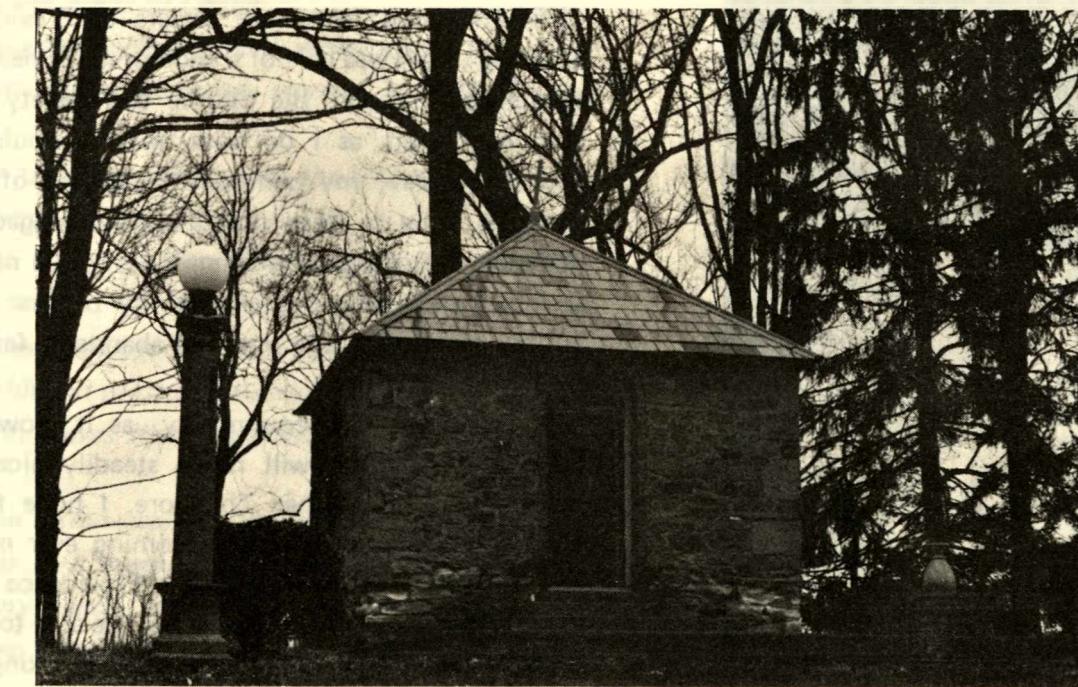
**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**  
1940, Massachusetts

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**  
1961

I never dreamed possible.

It has also been my experience that some sisters were willing to support me even when I did not have my life together. They were willing to give me the time to heal myself and to grow and mature.

I was out of the country when this community was facing its difficulties, but I believe now that our community is becoming aware of the times in which we live and is making the necessary changes to serve a people in a changing society.





### SISTER CECILIA CLARE BOCARD

To me, spiritual life is not lived in a vacuum, but must permeate our everyday living and grow by our everyday experiences. I cannot separate my spiritual life from the experience of life in general. Religious life should reflect this pattern. Living together with those who share the same goals and ideals, and who have taken the same vows has given me added strength and support.

I have been in this community for 62 years. I have stayed despite hardships and for the same reason that I entered in 1916 — a conviction that it was God's will for me to be here. While I was concerned about many of the difficulties that faced the Sisters of Providence, I felt all along that it was part of a widespread upheaval affecting all religious groups, the Church and society as a whole. I thought then, as I do now, that it would have been foolish to leave my community because of its internal struggles, only to learn that I had exchanged them for a different set of struggles somewhere else. I never thought seriously of leaving this community because these sisters are my family and one does not abandon a family because of internal problems.

I hope that this community, as it grows and looks toward the future, will move steadily along the path marked out by Mother Theodore. I hope that we will always be directed toward becoming ever more faithful and dedicated to making God's Providence known and loved. If we retain this spirit we will be able to move ahead with prudence and caution, while not risking the loss of the good in our past.

**NAME:**  
Sister Cecilia Clare Bocard, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**  
Organist/Liturgist  
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**  
1899, Indiana

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**  
1916

### Villanelle

*My hands, my hands, they lean toward you like clocks  
that edge their way from dawn to midnight  
and sway on waves like boats moored to their docks.*

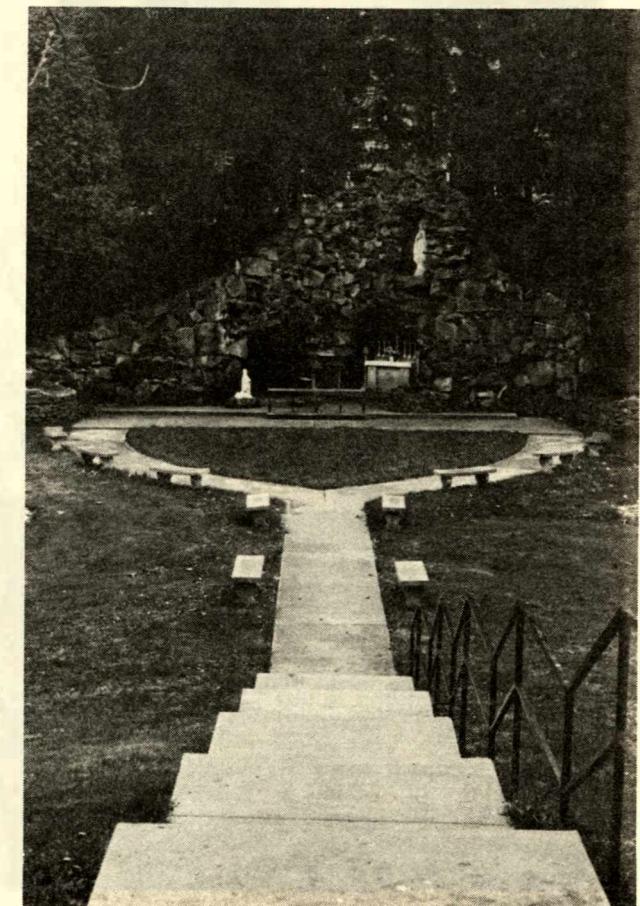
*Probing for answers among the rocks,  
they yearn upward toward the light . . .  
my hands, my hands, they lean toward you like clocks.*

*Roses wound my hands and mock  
the swollen sky like wine-drenched, weary kites  
that sway on waves like boats moored to their docks.*

*Your absence stalks my path among the rocks.  
Thunder empties the sky of light  
and my hands, my hands, they lean toward you like clocks.*

*When rain comes down to prophesy, it knocks  
deeper than thirst at roots that yearn for light  
that sways on waves like boats moored to their docks.*

*Laugh, sun, on roses weeping after rain. The light  
melts thunder to a murmur mourning skeletons of kites.  
My hands, my hands, they lean toward you like clocks  
that sway on waves like boats moored to their docks.*



## SISTER PAULA DAMIANO

**NAME:**

Sister Paula Damiano, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**

Associate Director of Vocations,  
Diocese of Orange, California

**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**

1949, Pennsylvania

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**

1967

In my job as Vocation Director, I meet many different communities of religious men and women. I often go away thinking how very fortunate we are. We are far from ideal, but at least we are striving for ideals . . . our renewal programs, corporate reflection days, retreats and chapter meetings—all of these have helped us so very much. We have had the opportunity to hear some of the finest speakers in the areas of theology and spirituality. We have had the chance to receive advanced degrees. I look at the present community and the many persons who are striving for a deep interior renewal. I see us as women who will need to be deeply rooted in prayer if we are to survive, because we seem to be more involved in activity than ever before. I think we are moving out of the somewhat "middle-class" existence that some of us became quite comfortable with in the last few years and that seems to be where we are going, toward a better Church and a more radical witness to gospel living.

I enjoy the position of Vocation Director. I felt that I wanted to share with others the joy and peace I have experienced in religious life. I believe in religious life and the future ahead of us. I suppose it is that belief, that God continues to call persons to life lived in poverty, celibacy and obedience, that has given me the excitement about doing vocation work.

Many women ask me about a religious vocation today and my response is that religious life is quite realistic and

valuable. The life of a religious woman today has the potential for opening up inner vistas to her. Through her vowed life and her life of prayer, she has a vehicle for deep discovery of her own self and her God. Because religious women are immersed in service-oriented works, the value of the contemplative part of life cannot be disputed.

What I found appealing at the age of 19, when I entered, is certainly not what has kept me here for these past 10 years. Before I entered I was attracted to religious life by individual sisters and the sense of service to the Church. Today one aspect of religious life that appeals to me is the potential for living out the vows, especially poverty. For me this extends beyond what I have or do not have materially. It is that basic sense of being human, of being open, waiting, receptive to God, accepting. Poverty is the stance I take with all of life, the created world of people and things, the inner world of spiritual life.

The Sisters of Providence have been very influential in my life. Their friendship, support and prayers continue to be important to me, but I find that support also comes from others outside the community . . . sisters from other communities, priests, and laypersons. It seems that today some of us operate in many different communities outside the Providence community. This is the aspect of religious life that "works" for me; it is being able to love freely and to receive love from others. And I am reasonably certain that I am becoming the person I'm meant to be.



### SISTER MARY FRANCES KEUSAL



**NAME:**  
Sister Mary Frances Keusal, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**  
Principal, Corpus Christi School  
Oklahoma City

**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**  
1938, Illinois

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**  
1956

I am convinced that the Sisters of Providence are blessed by God. I feel that there is a definite need for us in this world and that we are striving to meet definite needs. I recognize that there are many changes in the church and in the world, and that it is hard to say that we know exactly where we are going. However, to be able to say this would place limitations on the possibilities, and I don't want to do that not even in my own mind. I would like to think that we will go where God and God's people call. Knowing that there are so many needs among the people, and that I am only one individual who cannot meet all the needs, I delight in knowing that I belong to a community in which the sisters are encouraged to recognize and respond to needs in so many different areas.

My notion of spirituality reflects this idea. Spirituality is the relationship to God developed as I recognize God in the people I meet every day. Spirituality is an expanded notion of "humanity." I am spiritual as I meet, accept and respond to life experiences and then relate them to God. Through the example of my parents, I learned very early that each day brings equal amounts of life experience ingredients. I feel I have taken on some of their determination and persevering drive to accept each day with whatever it brings. Mother Theodore operated on this idea. Her persevering efforts to meet the needs of her time allowed her to accomplish her goals despite hardships. She had the faith and confidence to believe that the Sisters of Prov-

dence did have a place in America, and would succeed in filling it. This is what I would tell any woman interested in our community today: that religious life is practical, realistic and valuable to the degree to which the woman is willing to respond generously to the challenges of religious life.





### SISTER RITA ROETHELE

From the creation story we get the idea that humanity is called to be like God. As creator and maker, in a sense every human being is supposed to be an artist, for to create is to explain who we are and to say yes ceremonially to what happens to us. A painting has everything in it: intuition and release as well as structure. Color will lift you up and fill your soul with delight. You have to stand in front of paintings, look for a long time and experience them for yourself.

My vocation as a Sister of Providence has been a happy way of life for me for 32 years. I hope that my life and my work as an artist have touched many people.

As a member of this Community, I have enjoyed the support and encouragement of the sisters and have had an opportunity to develop and use my talents. I have known gratitude and appreciation from a variety of God's people whom I have been able to serve as a teacher.

As a Christian and a woman religious, I am a follower of Christ, trying in my own way to preach and live the teachings of Jesus. In my vocation as a sister, I have had the time and the example of other women to follow through with this way of life.

One could hardly live happily and with satisfaction unless she experienced considerable support and inspiration from her colleagues. I can readily affirm one of the most important factors in my religious life has come from shared experiences with some times older, sometimes

**NAME:**

Sister Rita Ann Roethele, S.P.

**MINISTRY:**

Artist in Residence,  
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College

**YEAR AND PLACE OF BIRTH:**

1926, Indiana

**YEAR ENTERED COMMUNITY:**

1947

younger and sometimes sisters my own age.

What has helped me to persevere? I suppose one could say the mysterious working of God's grace and a kind of special sense of responsibility to a free choice of final vows. Unquestionably, the flexibility of our own religious community since the Second Vatican Council had helped rather than threatened me in my desire to remain in religious life.

I trust in Providence, not in a passive way, but in the active processes presently at work in our Community. Through reflection and dialogue, we can determine the on-going changes in the needs of God's people we serve, and we can select with competency the best means possible for the Community to meet these needs.

Finally, I am a happy person, enjoying peace of soul, thankful that I enjoy human friendship, love others and am loved in return.



*Rhythms and Tension* is the work of Carolyn Myss and Sister Carol Hasler, S.P.

Carolyn holds a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from Saint Mary-of-the Woods College and a Master's Degree in Theology from Mundelein College. She has worked as a public relations director for a Chicago hospital, and as a reporter for both the *Terre Haute Star* and for the *Pioneer Press* in Chicago.

Sister Carol holds a Bachelor's Degree in Religious Studies from Mundelein College. Presently, she is a secondary school teacher in suburban Chicago. She has been a member of the congregation of the Sisters of Providence since 1974.

The poetry in *Rhythms and Tension* is the work of Sister Thomas Jeanne Doriot, S.P. She holds a Bachelor's Degree from Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College. These selections are taken from the book, *Diving After Flame*, submitted for the completion of her Master's thesis at the University of Indiana at Bloomington.

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Graphic Design by Carolyn Myss.

The Editors wish to extend special thanks to Sister Catherine Joseph Wilcox, S.P.

# THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods  
Indiana



MOTHERHOUSE AND MID-WESTERN PROVINCE  
United States of America

## SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

The Congregation of Sisters of Providence was first established in France early in the nineteenth century for the twofold purpose of teaching and of hospital work. The Motherhouse at Ruillé-sur-Loir, France, sent a colony of six Sisters, under the leadership of Mother Theodore Guérin to Indiana, in 1840, at the invitation of Most Reverend Celestine de la Hailandiere, Bishop of Vincennes.

The Sisters endured many privations and hardships in the pioneer days in Indiana, but accomplished remarkable results in establishing permanent educational foundations in Indiana and adjoining states. During the first decade of its existence in Indiana, the Congregation effected an amicable separation from the motherhouse in France. By this separation the American branch was left free to develop according to the needs and the spirit of American life, while still maintaining a friendly relationship with the parent establishment.

The Sisters of Providence consecrate

their lives to God to assist in the sanctification of souls by means of teaching in the elementary, secondary, and college fields, and by assisting in hospital work in times of national emergency. Hospital work as one of the main objectives was discontinued in order that the Congregation might devote itself more intensively to education. In the diversified needs of the administration of the Congregation, however, there is ample scope for the use of subjects prepared for dietetics work, school or home nursing, or for clerical work.

For more than twenty years the Congregation has had the privilege of Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and this sacred duty of adoration is filled by those who feel drawn to the contemplative life, and by other members of the community whose duties permit an occasional hour in the Blessed Sacrament chapel.

The Congregation has extended, through the blessing of God, into the states of Indiana, Illinois, Oklahoma, California, Massachusetts, Maryland, North Carolina, and into the missionary fields of China. The government of the Congregation consists of a general administration with the

motherhouse at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, and provincial establishments for the western, eastern, and mid-western houses. Anaheim, California, is the provincial house for the western establishments; Maryhurst Convent, Hyattsville, Maryland, for the eastern; and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods for the mid-western province. (Marywood School, Evanston, for the Illinois province; Saint Mary-of-the-Woods for the Indiana province.)

As 1940 draws near, the centenary of the foundation in America approaches. Initial steps have already been taken to obtain the approval of the Process of canonization of the courageous Foundress, Mother Theodore Guérin. The Congregation during these hundred years has labored to improve and adapt its teaching methods to the best and most exacting standards of modern educational requirements, but above all, it has endeavored to preserve the original spirit of the Congregation, with its simplicity of aim, its deep emphasis on the cultivation of an interior life for its members, and an all embracing charity for the salvation of souls.

# INDIANA ROOM



MOTHER THEODORE GUERIN

1798-1856

Foundress of the Sisters of Providence  
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

1840-1856

REFERENCE  
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## PRAYER

O Heart of Jesus, abiding with us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, we beseech Thee glorify Thy servant, Mother Theodore Guérin, and deign to grant the request which we make through her intercession, if it be for Thy honor and glory. Heart of Jesus, glorify Mother Theodore and grant our request. Amen.

## PRAYER FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF MOTHER THEODORE

O Jesus, Divine Teacher, by the merits of Thy life, Thy passion and death, by Thy love and burning zeal for souls, vouchsafe to hear our prayer and crown with the halo of the Blessed Thy servant, Mother Theodore, if it be for Thy greater honor and glory. Amen.

Imprimatur:

 JOSEPH RITTER,  
Bishop of Indianapolis

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods  
Indiana

REF ID: A8125  
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INDIANA ROOM

J.M.J.

### THE BELLS OF SAINT MARY'S

The bells of St. Mary's, oh, hear they  
are chiming

The church bells, the school bell -  
Their message they bring.

For breakfast and dinner, and supper  
their timing.

For work and play, to sleep and pray -  
Oh, hear them ring.

There are gongs and there are doorbells  
There are tower bells and handbells  
Of tin, lead, and silver,  
Of brass and of gold.

There are loud bells for rising,  
And that's not surprising.

They tune us in, and we begin -  
The story's told!

\*

\* \*

Madge - Patty Masson  
Liz. - Marty Becker

Irish Lullaby - - - - - Glee Club

Playmates - Anita Clune  
Teddy McCall

School Days - Jeannine Prevallat  
Jo Ann Langenderfer

Harmony Quartet - Mary Harries  
Mary Jo Clemons  
Pat Porter  
Mary Kay McGill

Let Me Call You Sweetheart  
Ann Corbett  
Mary Ann Weitz

Melodrama -  
Betty Armstrong  
Lee Dobscha  
Magdalen Tamborello  
Maja Lee Hardwick  
Ann Parenteau  
Donna Doughty

Family Portrait - Mary Allen  
Anita Clune  
Catherine Roubik  
Teddy McCall

Dancer - Mary Ann Jeanes

Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet - Mary Allen  
Catherine Roubik

Solo - Joyce Wilson

Among My Souvenirs - - - - - Glee Club

Mother Beloved - Student Body

Join your hands, Loyal bands,  
While we pledge one another  
Unity and fealty  
To our Queen and our Mother.  
One our faith; One our love;  
One our leader and Lord.  
One our aim; one hope above;  
One united accord.

Chorus:

Mother beloved of God and of men,  
Here at your feet, Faithful we meet,  
Comrades of Mary, Redeemed by your  
Son,  
Keep us, who love you, in all things  
One.

\* \* \* \* \*

Accompanists - - - Patty Beckerich  
Ann Geisel

J.M.J.

WELCOME HOME FROM THE PILGRIMAGE TO ROME

For our dear  
Reverend Mother Marie Helene  
and Sister Francis Joseph

HOME, SWEET HOME

'Mid pleasures and palaces tho' we  
may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place  
like home.  
A charm from the skies seems to hallow  
us there  
Which seek thro' the world, is ne'er  
met with elsewhere.

Home, home, sweet sweet home.  
There's no place like home,  
Oh, there's no place like home.

ITALIAN FOLK SONG - FINICULI, FINICULA

Welcome, welcome, welcome home to you.  
Welcome, welcome, welcome home. It's  
true

We missed you so, and we can know  
That you were missing us as well.  
Welcome home to you. It is the message  
we would tell.

FRENCH FOLK SONG - ON THE BRIDGE OF AVIGNON

O'er the sea, you'll agree  
France could give one quite a thrill.  
Yet to come home again  
Must have made you gladder still.

ENGLISH FOLK SONG - DRINK TO ME ONLY  
WITH THINE EYES

And now we sing, our glad WELCOME HOME  
We've prayed for you day by day!

HOMING - duet

You have come home at morning-tide  
Perhaps you're weary of your Rome-ing  
And you are eager here to bide  
Homing.

Across th' Atlantic you did go  
From daybreak to the gloaming  
On Pilgrimage which took you to and fro  
Rome-ing.

In Fatima you prayed for us all  
At Rome you kept us in remembrance  
At Lourdes and Ruille you did recall  
Praying.

You have come home this morning-tide  
We're glad that you'll no more be  
Rome-ing  
But rather with us you will bide  
Homing.

HOME, SWEET HOME - (Repeat)



ST. MARY OF THE WOODS—FEMALE ACADEMY.

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